

CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

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NO. 31.

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another, as I have loved you—JOHN xiii. 34.

FOR THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

SKETCHES NO. XIII.

THE PHARISEES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

The Pharisees were the most distinguished, popular and flourishing sect among the Jews. This name they assumed on account of their separating themselves to superior strictness in religious observances. They affected great mortification and abstraction from the world—imposed on themselves frequent fasts which they solemnized with all the formal austerities that superstition could invent—made long prayers at the corners of crowded streets, to attract upon them the eyes of the passing multitude, and cause themselves to be admired and venerated as mirrors of sanctity and devotedness to God. They disfigured their faces that they might appear to men to fast—they macerated their bodies with penal inflictions and abstinences—charged their features with gloom and solemnity—made their phylacteries ostentatiously broad—sounded a trumpet before them, to give public notice when they should distribute alms—paraded about the market, and places of public concourse, in long flowing robes, feasting on the incense and fulsome applause of the gazing vulgar. They compassed sea and land to make proselytes to the Jewish religion from among the Pagans; and these proselytes, through the influence of their own scandalous examples and characters, they soon rendered more profligate and abandoned than they ever were before their conversion. In short, from the faithful representation of our Saviour, and from the account of the Evangelists, they were a race of the most demure hypocrites that ever disgraced human nature—for under this specious mask of religion and piety, lurked the most abominable and atrocious vices. They made the essence of religion solely consist in scrupulously observing a vast

multiplicity of invented rites and ceremonies—embellishing it with external pomp, and show, and pageantry—discharging of little superstitious niceties and minute formalities—paying tithe of Mint, Anise, and Cummin, but utterly neglecting the weightier matters of the law, justice, fidelity and mercy—the former they most punctiliously performed, the latter they contemned, as of comparative insignificance—The scriptural glosses, and comments, and maxims of their rabbinical ancestors, they held in the highest estimation, and defamed the plain rules and prescriptions of the law of God, as but of subordinate and secondary value and excellence to them. “*They made the law of God of none effect, through their traditions.*” —But, by their fondness for these superstitious traditionary maxims, they absolutely vacated and annulled the plain and express injunctions of God by Moses and the prophets—teaching for doctrines, the commandments of men, and exalting human inventions into divine directions. They had always the greatest sway in the government, both of church and of state; and if at any time the Sadducees were, through necessity, compelled to fill any post of office and dignity, they were obliged, as Josephus assures us, to be under the direction of Pharisaic measures and influence. The common people were entirely devoted to them. This appears from many passages in Josephus, and above all, from the condemnation of Jesus Christ, recorded by the Evangelists—for though infinite crowds had conducted him in triumph to the capital and to the temple, yet no sooner were they conscious that the Pharisees and leading men were unanimous for his execution, but they joined in the general clamour; Crucify him!—Crucify him! This would be unaccountable, considering the late honours and adoration they universally paid him, did not we know, both from Josephus and from Scripture, that the common people were entirely at the disposal of the Pharisees, and

implicitly gave their suffrage to every religious prescription and judicial sentence that had their sanction. So absolutely is their influence over the multitude, says Josephus, that if they speak but a word, even against a king or an high priest, they are instantly credited. They were adored by the people, and this inflated them with such supercilious arrogance and pride. The Sadducees believing there was no resurrection, neither Angel nor Spirit, but the Pharisees confessed both. But their notion of the resurrection was nothing more than the Pythagorean transmigration, as appears from the testimony of Josephus, who was a Pharisee. They believed the doctrine of Predestination, and that all things were under the government of an irreversible fatality. The doctrine of everlasting torments was an article of their creed. In fine, the scrupulous performance of a thousand trifling minuteness made up their religion—the love and acquisition of power, and the reputation of superior sanctity, were the end and aim of all their actions—they had the forms of godliness; but were strangers to the power of it—for they were under the dominion of the most detestable of all vices, spiritual pride and hypocrisy!

* * *

FROM THE UNIVERSALIST MAGAZINE.

Many hard words have been said against those who profess to believe in the final salvation of all men, because it is feared that they give encouragement to men who live in sin. But this is so far from being a truth, that they declare that sin is punished by a law of necessity, and that no man can indulge in sin without enduring the punishment which must attend it. Is this doctrine so licentious as that which says that sinners are happier in this world than the righteous, and that, were it not for the reward of endless felicity, on one

hand, or the punishment of endless misery on the other, it would be better to live in sin than to practice righteousness? Y. Z.

A SERMON DELIVERED IN THE SECOND UNIVERSALIST MEETING HOUSE IN BOSTON, ON THE EVENING OF THE FIRST SABBATH IN JANUARY, 1818, BY HOSEA BALLOU, PASTOR.*

2 Thessalonians i. 7, 8, 9. "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

ON account of the use which has been made of our text by the learned doctors of the christian church, and the force of prejudice in the human mind, occasioned by religious education, the preacher feels no small degree of embarrassment in attempting to communicate from these words to his numerous audience.

That doctrine which becomes impressed on the mind in youth and is consecrated by numerous solemn institutions and rites; that doctrine imbibed from the lips of parental kindness

* This Sermon was the occasion of a controversy between the author of the Sermon and the Rev. T. Merrit, a Methodist preacher in Boston. Mr. M. commenced an attack on the Sermon, in a pamphlet of 16 pages, entitled "Strictures on Mr. Ballou's Sermon," &c. to which Mr. B. replied, in a pamphlet of 24 pages. After which Mr. M. published "A vindication of the common opinion relative to the last judgment and end of the world—in answer to Mr. Ballou's Reply," &c. containing 32 pages:—To which Mr. B. replied in a pamphlet of 40 pages. Here ended the controversy: and here, in our opinion, it will ever rest: for as no one will ever appear, in this enlightened age, to support Mr. M. in his "Vindication of the common opinion relative to the last judgment and end of the world," so no one, after reading this controversy, will ever again attempt to refute the doctrine maintained in this sermon. If we should publish Mr. Ballou's Replies, without publishing Mr. Merrit's Strictures and Vindication, the reason will appear obvious; not because we are afraid of any effect they would have on the minds of our readers, but because it would be a waste of time and paper, since the leading features of his Strictures and Vindication are made sufficiently apparent, and his principal arguments are fairly stated by Mr. B. in his replies. But we design to publish nothing more than the Sermon, to the exclusion of any original matter which may be offered for the Messenger. ED.

and enforced by the awful solemnities of public and private devotions; that doctrine whose currency is supported by a learned ministry, and guarded by all their influence is so deeply rooted in the soil where it is planted, that to call it in question, successfully expose its errors, (however absurd they may be,) and disprove it to the understanding, require the clear shining of the lamp of divine wisdom.

On the other hand, a few considerations induce encouragement and invite by favourable promises. A persuasion is entertained that this christian audience is mostly composed of that class of people who are already possessed of a spirit of candour, and have come to the happy determination to examine doctrine for themselves, and to be guided therein by the spirit of God, the scriptures of truth, and the reasonableness of things. But that, which more than any thing else, gives us support in this undertaking, is the clear light in which our subject stands when duly considered and understood by the words in which it is stated, and especially when associated with concurrent scriptures.

If the case were different; if darkness lay upon the text; if the passage stood without a parallel, your servant would by no means approach it, or attempt by any wisdom of his own to explain what the faithful testimony had left in the dark.

Our labours may first be directed to correct the common use of this portion of truth.

It is generally maintained that this passage refers to, or is rather an account of the last judgment; and the last judgment is supposed to be assigned to a period of time hereafter, when the material universe shall have been dissolved. At that awful tribunal, we have been religiously educated to believe, will be assembled all the descendants of Adam, who shall have lived and died, and all who shall be on the earth at the trying hour, commonly called the end of the world. Then shall the judgment proceed according to the works of men, and rewards in heaven and endless felicity be bestowed on them who shall be found to have been righteous in this world; but on the contrary, the tremendous doom of never ending woe, enhanced by every mean at the com-

mand of Omnipotence will be pronounced on the miserable wretches whose works shall be found to have been sinful. This is believed the subject of our text, and that when the dreadful sentence is pronounced, the Lord Jesus with his mighty angels will sally forth, in flaming fire on the wicked and be the minister of unspeakable anguish, to far the greatest part of the human family, world without end.

These are the views which have been, and are now entertained of the text under consideration. These are the sentiments which have been inculcated in our minds in childhood, and are now supported by the incalculable influence of prejudice and the imposing authority of our learned doctors.

Shall we call these sentiments in question? Are you prepared to attend with patience and candour, to hear arguments directed to disprove a doctrine which pleads prescription in its support! But how shall we make the attack? We will first examine the consistency of what tradition has taught; we will see if one part agrees with another. If we find contradictions in the testimony, it surely cannot endure the light of truth as it cannot bear its own weight.

The same system of human wisdom, which hath inculcated this heart chilling and soul revolting doctrine, hath also imposed on the mind of credulity the following:

When the unregenerate, the unconverted, the unbeliever, the wicked man dies, he descends immediately to the shades of hopeless despair, when his state is fixed by an irrevocable decree of heaven for ever and ever. There is now no more opportunity of repentance, no more invitations to embrace an offered salvation; and though the poor wretch would now give a thousand worlds, if he had them, for one gracious offer, or one hour in which to repent, his prayer would be buffeted with vindictive wrath.

On the contrary, when the regenerated, the elected, the believer dies, he is graciously conducted by an heavenly escort to the celestial mansions of heavenly bliss, when his state is fixed by an unalterable decree, and where he will continue in all the felicity of heaven eternally.

Now if this tradition be correct,

what need is there of this day of future judgment? Will it be necessary in order to ascertain whether the former sentences were according to justice? Will those who have been in heaven thousands of years, be now called to judgment? Must all their crimes, have been forgiven, now be re-examined and their souls be put in jeopardy? Look on the other hand; here are millions of wretched immortals, who have groined away many ages in the torments of hell, now permitted to have their trial! But stop—the absurdity of this tradition is too palpable to require further examination. In the next place we shall contend that the opinion so long perpetuated by tradition, of what is termed the last judgment, the last day, the end of the world, has no support in the scriptures. This doctrine is not found in the sacred oracles before me. The speaker knows what he says, and he holds himself accountable to his hearers for every sentence. You all have your bibles, and can, if you will, show the speaker his error, if he has not stated this matter correctly. The translators of our bible, or somebody else, have inserted in the contents of some chapters this opinion of the last judgment, but after all the respect which the opinions of men are entitled to, the testimony of divine truth has much higher claims, and however difficult it may be to give up this sentiment, none of us would think of maintaining it barely on the authority of human testimony.

Continued in our next.

Christian Messenger.

Philadelphia, Saturday, March 3, 1821.

FROM THE AMERICAN DAILY ADVERTISER.
STRANGE DOCTRINE.

MR. POULSON,

In this happy country, a spirit of toleration as to matters of religion, very generally prevails; and we ought, on all occasions, to evince our gratitude to Heaven, for the inestimable favour. But the unrestrained liberty we enjoy, and which we all prize so highly, may, if caution be not observed, degenerate into licentiousness. When this should unhappily be the case, some who profess to be Christians, will possibly be found propagating opinions, more de-

trimental to sound morals and genuine piety, than even barefaced infidelity itself.

On Sabbath evening last, I turned into one of the houses for public worship, in the southern part of this city, where a large and attentive auditory were assembled. If the speaker were not misunderstood, he denied, unreservedly, to my great surprise, the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, and zealously contended, that death [the death of the body] was the *only* "wages of sin!"—From such a position, this is the natural inference: that vice and villainy, of every description, will, after the termination of existence here, reap the same harvest of eternal bliss, with the humble and devoted believer.—The horrid consequences to be apprehended from the dissemination of such a doctrine, are fitted to make one shudder. If it be true, no restraint need be imposed on any of our vicious propensities or passions, and he must be blind, indeed, to his true interests, who would long endure pain or sorrow, while a "bare bodkin" might release him forever from their dominion! At such a period as this, and in such a quarter, is it not absolutely astonishing to hear tenets of this character promulgated? They are calculated to undermine the foundation of society, to render nugatory all the obligations of an oath, and to break down every distinction between vice and virtue. He who is sufficiently infatuated or wicked to entertain them, is disqualified by a wise provision of our state constitution from holding "any office or place of trust or profit under this commonwealth." But notwithstanding all this, those who propagate them, modestly term themselves ministers of the gospel of peace, and teachers of divine truth!!

A LAYMAN.

FROM THE SAME:

MR. POULSON,

I notice a piece in your paper this morning, February 23d, signed "A Layman," representing or rather *misrepresenting*, a discourse which he says he heard "on Sabbath evening last, in the southern part of the city, where a large and attentive auditory were assembled," in which he says, "if the

speaker were not misunderstood, he denied, unreservedly, to my great surprise, the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, and zealously contended, that death [the death of the body] was the *only* "wages of sin!"—The writer then goes on to draw his conclusions from this *phantom* of his own making, to the prejudice, no doubt, of the speaker, whom he has so clearly identified as not to be misunderstood. The speaker alluded to, is believed to be the man who preaches in the Universalist Church, in Lombard street; and, unless this is disavowed, we shall so consider it—and therefore, it is on this account, and under this consideration, that we charge the writer with misrepresenting the doctrine advanced by the speaker. So far from the death of the body's being the "*only*" wages of sin, according to that speaker, he contends that man was subject to natural death, that is, the death of the body, even before sin existed; and although sin may often be the *occasion*, it is never the *cause* of natural death. See Kneeland's Lectures, page 59, note.

[The public will undoubtedly think strange that nothing more was said upon the personal attack of the "Layman;" it is therefore necessary to inform them, that the piece in reply was mutilated, a part only being published; the remainder of the piece in reply which has been returned, but crossed out by Mr. Poulson, is as follows:]

Now, although it is not believed that "the death of the body is the *only* 'wages of sin,'" yet it is believed that men commit sin, as well as receive its wages, *only* while they are *living*, and not in a state of natural death. The wise man says, "the dead know nothing," and while men know *nothing*, they can neither commit sin nor receive wages. But whether men will be liable to commit sin, or whether it will be necessary that they should be punished for sin, when they shall have ceased to commit it, that is, in a state of *immortality*; or whether there is to be any other future state of existence than that which is *immortal*, remains for the "Layman," or some one else to prove; and some of the above propositions must be proved before the speaker can be charged with preaching a doctrine any more "strange" than that delivered by St. Paul. And we furthermore

suspect that it was a few quotations from the inspired apostle, which excited the "great surprise" in a "Layman!" such, perhaps, as the following, "the wages of sin is death: but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." "For he that is dead is freed (Gr. *justified*) from sin." Romans vi.

Thus much we have thought proper to state; in justice to the speaker alluded to, by way of explanation, merely to prevent the deleterious effects of misrepresentation; though we are far from insinuating that the misrepresentation was designed, as mankind are very liable to be mistaken; especially when they hear a doctrine so new to them, and so uncommon to be preached, as that of the Bible! And we would now advise every one who should hear the speaker alluded to, (which all are advised to do for themselves,) to endeavour to understand what they hear before they undertake to represent it to the public. We here assert once for all, without any fear of being contradicted, that the doctrine generally, which is both preached and believed by the people who worship in the church alluded to by a "Layman," is, "that sin and misery are inseparably connected, and as long as *sin* continues, *misery* will, and must, as its legitimate consequences, *ensue*."

CANDOUR.

We shall make no comment on the circumstance of the above mutilated piece, any farther than to say, that, as the piece signed, "A Layman," was very personal, and grossly incorrect in point of fact, we think that it was no more than an act of justice due to the injured party to have published the reply in full; especially after the writer had pledged himself not to reply again. We leave the public to draw their own conclusions.

It will be perceived that nothing more was stated in the above communication than what was thought necessary by the writer, to correct which he conceived might have been an innocent mistake; and at the same time let the public know what was preached for gospel truth. Not a word was said about "the unrestrained liberty we enjoy," which the "Layman" seemed to think, that "if caution be not observed," might "degenerate into licentiousness!" Now

what is this "caution" which he wishes to have "observed?" to restrain the liberty of conscience? It is undoubtedly fair to draw such an inference from such premises. But we do not hesitate to say that it would only require a little more of the same spirit to restrain conscience with fire and faggots!

"From such a position," continues the "Layman," "this is the natural inference: that vice and villany of every description, will, after the termination of existence here, reap the same harvest of eternal bliss, with the humble and devoted believer." Here is another gross mistake which was not noticed in the above communication. The doctrine which we hold, is, that both virtue and vice will reap the harvest they merit, whatever it be, in the same *field* where the *seed is sown*; and that we might as well expect to sow seeds in America and reap a harvest from them in Europe, as to sow in time and reap the fruit in eternity. "Eternal life is the gift of God," which must excite the highest gratitude in the breast of every "humble and devoted believer:" hence "boasting is excluded," as no one can receive it by his own works.

"If it," (i. e. the doctrine) continues the Layman, "be true, no restraint need be imposed on any of our vicious propensities and passions!" No, not for the good of society, not for the happiness of the community, not for the peace and quietness of the individual, not for any thing which can be enjoyed in life, is virtue worth possessing! No! not for all the miseries constantly attendant on vice, need that be avoided! only let us be sure of happiness in another world, and it is no matter what we do in this!!! This is exactly the doctrine advanced by the "Layman," for which any man of common decency would blush, yea, ought to be *ashamed*!

The "Layman" has referred us to "our state constitution:" but what has the constitution of this, or any other state to do with the rights of conscience? And as it respects an "oath," the bare *word*, without an *oath*, not only of the speaker, but also of the principal members of the church alluded to, would be taken as soon as the *oaths* of men generally who believe in the doctrine of *endless misery*!* Have we men in

* This is not spoken to the disparagement of any one; we believe that no good man

our city or common council, whose word cannot be trusted, even on *oath*? Yet the church alluded to, has undoubtedly done its full proportion in furnishing those officers of "trust." We confess that none of our characters are any too good; neither do we speak of any one by way of boasting; but people who live in glass houses should take care how they throw stones; for if we are driven to it, we are not afraid, nor ashamed, to turn out character for character, man for man.

We close this subject without further remark.

The following is a true copy of the notice which was presented to Mr. Kneeland, to be given out by him, and which was given out from his desk, in Lombard street, last sabbath morning. Its having been presented by the person himself who was to deliver the discourse, therein mentioned, there can be no doubt but that it is his own hand-writing; and it being a singular production, we give it to the public, *ad verbum*. After reading this notice, no one will think strange that Mr. K. excused himself from meeting such an antagonist; and we would now advise the *dear man* to attend a little more to his *Spelling Book*, before he undertakes to expound the *Scriptures*.

"Philadelphia February

"Thair Will be A disCorse deliverd At the New African Meeten House in lumbar St be twen fifth And Sixth st Cold the West Ley Meeting house Monday evenIng next At half Past 6 o clock from Romans the 9 And 21 And 22 Ananswer to unaver salism"

TRANSLATION.

"There will be a discourse delivered at the New African Meeting House, in Lombard street, (called the Wesley Meeting House,) between Fifth and Sixth street, on Monday evening next, at half past 6 o'clock, from Rom. ix. 21, 22. in answer to Universalism!"

considers himself any more bound to tell the truth because he is under *oath*: all that the oath does, is to oblige a witness to tell things which otherwise he might think he had a right to conceal: but any man who will wilfully lie when not under oath, even his oath is not to be trusted. Now, what is it that adds solemnity to an oath? is it the fear of eternal torments? and would other christians perjure themselves were it not for this fear? Whatever others may think, we think better of them. It is on this principle, therefore, that we say a good man's word will be taken as soon as his oath; and we have the same opinion of all men in this respect. It cannot be made to appear that oaths are considered any more sacred, or do any more good in society, where the doctrine of endless misery is universally preached, and universally believed, than where it is neither preached nor believed at all.